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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Monday, November 15, 1943

Subject: "KITCHEN INTRUDERS." Information from the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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Why share rationed food---or any other good food---with kitchen intruders like ants or cockroaches? These days we're all trying to make "food fight for freedom." We produced all we could in our Victory gardens this past summer. We conserved what we could be canning and storing and other means. Now we try to conserve food by preventing waste in the pantry and on the table. We'll share food with those who need it---but we won't share it with insect pests that contaminate what they touch, so that we have to throw the food away. If we let food be wasted in this way in our homes, we're not playing square with others who might have used what we had to discard.

Even crumbs and scraps left carelessly about count in this food waste, because they attract insects that soon overrun our staple food supplies. Entomologists of the U.S.Department of Agriculture say that if you don't act promptly when you find one or two ants or cockroaches or other pests about, these unwelcome intruders will soon begin to raise large families. The entomologists are glad to tell you how to get rid of insect pests that are already in, and how to keep them out in the future.

So first, let's find out how to deal with the ins -- the insects that are already established. Look for their breeding places and runways, the entomologists say. The worst "kitchen intruders" at this time of year are cockroaches, ants, flies, and pomace flies or gnats. Cockroaches hide in cracks, behind baseboards, in openings for heating pipes, under sinks---wherever it's damp or moist, or where they are likely to find crumbs of food or spots of grease. Ants go for

sweet things---sugar, sirup, cake crumbs, and also for grease. Pomace flies or gnats breed in fruit that ripens fast if you don't store it in the refrigerator. Flies breed in garbage, manure piles, grass cuttings, and other decaying matter.

You can get rid of an ant hill by fumigating it with paradichlorobenzene (para-di-chloro-benzene) of some other fumigant. Then sprinkle a poison powder around wherever you see ants running. The same powder will kill cockroaches if they crawl over it. Try sodium fluoride, or pyrethrum powder, if you can get it, or ordinary borax. Spread any of these powders thinly where you have seen the insects run. Be sure to keep sodium fluoride out of the reach of children. It is poisonous to humans as well as insects.

You can also get commercial poison baits to spread on or mix with food that is attractive to insects. To get rid of ants, you can make a satisfactory bait by dissolving half a cup of sugar in 1 quart of water and stir in half an ounce of tartar emetic. To kill grease-eating ants, mix the tartar emetic with some form of grease. Try loading a sponge with poison bait, then placing it near the place where you see the ants coming in. The ants will carry the poison to the nest where it will kill the whole brood.

For a cockroach bait, spread phosphorus paste on a piece of cardboard and roll it up loosely. Leave it where the roaches run. You can get directions for preparing this bait and for getting rid of other insects in other ways from a new folder recently issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It's called "Kitchen Intruders", and it's free. Just ask for it by name.

Another remedy you could try, to get rid of insects that are in, is a double A grade household spray. This spray will kill most of the insects it hits, but it won't reach the source of the insects. That's why you'll need also to look for the cockroach runways, the anthills, and other places where insects settle down and flourish.

Now for keeping the outs out. Remember that insects are constantly hunting for food. When they locate it, they remain and lay their eggs in it, or go away and come back, either alone or with others of their kind. So to keep insects away, don't tempt them with even a crumb of food of any kind.

Keep all food out of reach of insects. Use tin or glass containers with tight covers for any foods likely to attract insects---particularly cereals, crackers, cookies and cake. Keep bread in a covered, but ventilated, box. Put left-overs in the refrigerator. Remove all food refuse from the kitchen after each meal. If you use a garbage pail, keep the pail in a tight container with a tight cover. Scrub your garbage can often. And don't allow dirty dishes to accumulate in the kitchen. The food particles on them are a certain invitation to ants, cockroaches, and flies. Wash up thoroughly after each meal.

Prevent insects from entering. Plug openings to keep cockroaches out---especially plug cracks under the baseboards, around plumbing pipes, and other "ports of entry". For plugging you can use putty, plaster of paris, or plastic wood. Roaches sometimes come into the kitchen on vegetables from the market, so look over vegetables and their containers and kill any cockroaches you find. Put fresh fruits in the refrigerator so they won't get overripe and breed fruit flies.

Don't forget that all these insect kitchen intruders contaminate and dirty the food they touch, so that even if you protect most of your supplies by tight containers, anything reached by insects has to be thrown away. So when we let insects hang around the kitchen we are not fully living up to the pledge to "Produce, conserve, share, and play square with our food."

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